



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
730 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA 02476
Phone: 781-316-3000

webmaster@town.arlington.ma.us

Historic Districts Commission Minutes 06/24/2004

Commissioners Present: J. Worden, S. Makowka, M. Potter, M. Hope Berkowitz, A. Alberg, L. Kuhn

Commissioners Absent: B. Cohen, M. Penzenik, M. Logan, Y. Logan

Guests Present: Jeff Salocks, Michael Hart, Mary Hart, Alexis Hart, Bob Pajouhi, Steve McKenna, Brian Callahan, Robert Bowes, Louise Ivers, Brianne Nadelberg, Jasmin Klingan, F. Klingan, John F. Costa, T. Manuelian, John Manuelian

1. Commissioner S. Makowka called the meeting to order at 8:10pm. Alternate commissioners appointed as follows: S. Makowka and M. Potter to Mt Gilboa/Crescent Hill and Pleasant Street, and M. Potter to Russell.

2. Review & approval of minutes of April and May by Commissioners.

April 2004 draft minutes – description of informal meeting 1035 Westminster should read, “if rear deck is not visible it does not require a certificate of appropriateness” – J. Worden moved approval with that modification – seconded by A. Alberg, unanimously approved

May 2004 Draft Minutes – Mr. Noonan’s attorney’s name to be corrected in draft minutes, should be Donald Garrity – A. Alberg moved approval with that modification, seconded by M. Potter, approved unanimously.

3. COMMUNICATIONS

S. Makowka reported 9 communications

1. S. Makowka met briefly with developer to discuss Commission process with regard to potential development of 2 adjacent lots on Westminster. Developer to be before Commission tonight for an informal hearing.

2. S. Makowka received application for Cert. of Non-Applicability at 184 Pleasant Street due to work not being subject to public view. A visual inspection, however, indicates that the proposed changes to garage would be visible from the street, thus the certificate of non-applicability will be denied. Denial letter to be sent.

3. Application for Certificate of Non-Applicability from St. John’s Episcopal Church located at 74 Pleasant Street for repair/replacement of existing sign w/similar sign, existing one 61” wide, new one 64” wide and 1 or 2 in. taller. S. Makowka going ahead to approve w/conditions (same location, no exposed pressure treated wood). Commissioners approved with S. Makowka to be monitor for project

4. Pleasant Street property owner called regarding plans to build garage on side yard. Homeowner plans to ask for formal hearing at next month’s meeting.

5. S. Makowka noticed uncertificated work being performed at Tanner house located at 56 Jason Street (corner Jason and Irving). – Worker had installed 3 vinyl windows – S. Makowka asked him to stop, advising that a certificate is required for this work – S. Makowka suggested he keep all of the removed window sashes – Contractor was in process of replacing 6 windows, 2 on back (visible), 2 on side façade toward Jason St., and 2 on front façade to still be done – S. Makowka gave contact info – S. Makowka will follow up and contact Police Chief Ryan for a cease & desist order if necessary.

6. End of year budget issues – \$1500-\$1600 remaining in budget – S. Makowka will encumber it and J. Worden will help if necessary to make sure money is transferred correctly to next year's budget

7. S. Makowka announced that 14 Jason Street (#20 on 6/24 Agenda) has not responded to e-mails and questioned whether a notice of violation should be sent? Board discussed that it's been almost 6 months and they believe a letter should be sent now.

8. S. Makowka said Atty. John Maher contacted him re: potential Jarvis House roof renovations – S. Makowka forwarded an application and the Design Guidelines.

9. S. Makowka also reported he spoke with neighbor of 210 Pleasant Street, John Costa, 214 Pleasant, about their concerns on new project at the former address.

J. Worden – reported 3 communications

1) Husband of lady of address adjacent to 210 Pleasant Street saw notice of plan to build addition onto deck house by water – she wanted to send letter opposing project – J. Worden received no such letter however (woman was at meeting with husband and spoke against project – M/M Manuelian, 212 Pleasant Street, see below)

2) Attorney John Maher informed him that Mr. Noonan had come to see him regarding why no subcommittee was formed as requested by him at last hearing. Also concerned at so little progress on the project. J. Worden explained to Mr. Maher the situation from last month, especially the Commissioners' frustration at having almost exactly the same proposal at May meeting as at previous meeting despite considerable Commissioners' input regarding the then presented project.

3) Mr. Maher mentioned that town will be reroofing the Jarvis House and questioned if a Certificate is required? He said the Public Works director would be in touch soon to handle the specifics of the job

3. OTHER BUSINESS

- a) S. Makowka requested updates on projects
- b) Preservation Fund – J. Worden reported a request for application for a property not in one of our districts.
- c) New homeowners – S Makowka requested Executive Secretary to contact absent Commissioner Y. Logan for list of new owners so she could send letters.
- d) Clarification on list of projects: M. Potter will monitor 82 Westminster Ave., and B. Cohen will monitor 25 Elder Terrace.
- e) S. Makowka is concerned about number of continuances for July, proposes July and mid-August meeting and to maybe start earlier in July.
- f) Hearing procedures – L. Kuhn expressed positive feedback regarding new layout of tables at meeting, feels change for the positive – Name cards for Commissioners requested for future meetings – Group discussed the need to request presenters to provide materials on a timely basis – decision to have a checklist by Exec. Sec. Greeley to be reviewed prior to meetings – Request 10 copies of application and materials to be given to commissioners (this will facilitate the review of the project) – Exec. Sec. Greeley suggests all paperwork be due the Friday prior to the scheduled meeting.
- g) J. Worden had new business regarding guidelines for new construction. Noted that this year many more applications than in previous history. What do guidelines say? He believes current guidelines could more clearly articulate Commission criteria for proposed new construction. It doesn't indicate strong prejudice on preserving open space in the Districts. J. Worden distributed thoughts on paper and suggested Commissioners try to draft clarification of new guidelines, especially dealing with additions & new construction. He feels articulating preference to keep open space is fairer to applicants. Right now he feels they may see different message when they read design guidelines – S. Makowka said that the Commission always considered the Design Guidelines a living document that would be updated and clarified as necessary over time – All present Commissioners agreed with J. Worden that more clarity would be a good thing. – J. Worden said he would wait for input. S. Makowka asked J. Worden to send draft to others to jump start process, J. Worden agreed.
- h) Website – S. Makowka exchanged e-mails with Ms. Galkowski re: posting documents on Town website – S. Makowka will work with Exec. Sec. Greeley to get up and running.

- i) Exec. Sec. Greeley will update directory list with corrections and e-mail to Commissioners for approval of information
- j) New commissioners – S. Makowka reminded Commissioners of need to find additional commissioners to fill vacant seats on Broadway, Central, and Mt. Gilboa Commissions – don't need to be residents in District since anyone from Town can be nominated.
- k) Missing Pleasant Street and Jason Street Historical District signs still not returned – follow up required to DPW.
- l) Academy Street extension – A. Alberg spoke with representative but they seemed to have made little progress. Given required schedule, preliminary report should be getting worked on now. Mr. Duffy indicated that he has spoken to the group 2 times before and provided them with considerable information.
- m) J. Worden told the Commissioners he spoke with Mr. Grady (20 Jason Street) regarding the post next to driveway. End result is that the post is gone and Mr. Grady has sunk 2 plastic tubes to support temporary child safety net when desired.
 - The Commissioners were pleased with this outcome.

4. NEW BUSINESS

8:30pm – Continuation of Formal Hearing Re: Lot 47 Pleasant Street (Noonan)

Mr. Noonan requested extension for 60 days; given consent to continue hearing form until August 31, 2004 but plans to be present in July. – Exec. Sec. Greeley to Schedule Hearing for 7/22.

9:00pm – Continuation of Formal Hearing Re: 82 Westminster Avenue (Ivers)

Consideration of request for addition of rear deck and sliding doors.

Per Mrs. Ivers the deck is to be extended all the way across the rear of the house, with the new stairs to be built in same location as the existing stairs from the (to be removed) side door – there will be no means of egress from deck to back yard, stairs towards front – the design has changed and the drawing presented in support of application does not accurately portray final deck design – final deck to extend 12 feet out – M. Potter requested a materials list – not yet available per Mrs. Ivers but indicated deck will be mahogany – L. Kuhn indicated that more details are required (materials, balusters, posts & rails, no exposed pressure treated, rear doors, caps on posts (in keeping w/something of that period, probably pyramid). – Questions re: long posts supporting deck, can be pressure treated only if encased w/pine for more heft (final dimensions at least 5 x 5) – Questions regarding sliders, why not French doors, sliders not really appropriate, suggest instead a set of double doors (multi pane, true divided light, insulated glass suggested) with heights of window and doors to be the same – S. Makowka requested that Mrs. Ivers provide material specifications for deck, door, and window, as well as drawings of revised deck plans – M. Potter told Mrs. Ivers to call her with any questions about required information. Exec. Sec. Greeley to schedule continued hearing for 7/22.

9:15pm - Informal Hearing Re: 53 Westminster Avenue (Callahan)

Proposal to add 2 additional houses on 2 vacant lots.

S. Makowka spoke regarding informal hearing early in process for best results. Steve McKenna (Realtor, Bowes/GMAC Real Estate of Arlington) and Brian Callahan (Builder) presented project. Mr. McKenna said owners came to realtor to develop lots.

The Commission was presented with pictures showing the grade. The petitioners are hoping to get the Commissions approval to build something, not a mansion, something with character, detailing, etc. He wants something that he will be proud to say he built.

He noted that the wall has been an important factor regarding the current streetscape. He wants to continue that feeling, but wishes to eliminate falling rock and add 2 simple homes. The zoning setback requirement is 25 feet. He said 2 simple houses considered. The grade shows significant change on Westminster Ave. so he'd probably put a garage under structures. He reiterated that he is not looking for approvals, just direction from the Commission. Mr. Callahan spoke of the overgrown nature of this site with rocks tumbling down and also a deteriorating stonewall. He said he's hoping to improve area with 2 beautiful antique-looking homes while maintaining and extending the existing wall. He showed examples of other houses in District as well as new construction that could serve as models and explained why these should fit the site. He said the land has very steep grade, house about 30 feet out in front – further back than other houses. The current area is in need of an upgrade. He wants to carry the stonewall down to meet the other one about 60 feet away. The current break in the wall would be repaired and the walls would be continuous (except for garage entries).

L Kuhn asked about the existing house on left 1 ½ story contrasted with the proposed 2½ to 3 story houses. Mr. Callahan said he is trying to go in between existing house on right (much bigger) and left (smaller but set higher due to slope of land). Overall project will look lower because the street slopes down. A. Alberg had a question regarding massing and scale. She said the way to address concerns is with the Commissioners so they're clear and things remain harmonious. The Commission's job is to be sure the feeling of area is same after development or is enhanced. Mr. Callahan said he appreciates Commission's charge and his answer is to give you footprint & setbacks, to not build too big a house onto to little a lot. A. Alberg said she felt right now space

overgrown and that the very hilly, rocky nature of Mt. Gilboa contributed to the character of area. If giving up nature area need to make sure everything works. The best way for the Commission to know how it will look and to deliver a favorable opinion is to see a topographical model.

L. Kuhn told Mr. Callahan to start with conceptual ideas with the Commission. It would be helpful to come in with a cardboard topo model showing grades (10 ft increments) and proposed structures relative to other houses on the street. J. Worden explained to Mr. Callahan why topo model is very important. Seeing heights of houses is very telling. He said that the Commission owes it to residents to be able to “visualize what it will look like”. J. Worden pointed out that these big old rocks became part of environment as what was left over from the Ice Age. Outcroppings are an important part of the environment. He for one is extremely nervous about giving up rocks and plopping houses on top of them. He also pointed out that houses (#51 example) are a mix of styles so needs to look at the scale of buildings. A big, tall house probably not ok given existing rooflines. Again, the topo model will show all of these elements more clearly.

M. Hope Berkowitz cautioned proponents to maintain as much as possible with the development of the land. She is concerned about potential project and was stating that very clearly. M. Potter reiterating that it might work but it might not work and nothing might ever be built.

The topo model will help get everyone an idea of the scale of houses. L. Kuhn said the neighbors’ reactions to new building also important. Part of the reason that District was created was to preserve the historical character of the neighborhood including existing natural states and the Commission has to be extremely sensitive to abutters. Construction on lots previously considered unbuildable may not be appropriate.

Mr. Callahan spoke again and said the face on the rock not to be altered. L. Kuhn noted that when showing quality of house in pictures handed out as part of the presentation, the front looks traditional but the side looks contemporary – not appealing to Commission. He wants to see all 3 elevations, etc. Keep in mind pictures should show foundation details --brick, faced, etc, a lot will show given the slope of the lots.

9:40pm - Formal Hearing Re: 33 Russell Street (Littlewood)

Replacement of existing wood steps with granite steps

The application was submitted, but no details accompanied it. Mr. Littlewood stated that he wants to replace 2 wooden steps w/granite steps that match the step at grade exactly. The granite will have antique edges and the color of granite compatible w/others in area. However, because the application was missing requested pictures, drawings, plot plan, etc., the Commissioners indicated that they could not fully conceptualize the project. L. Kuhn said granite steps might be appropriate and could be a great improvement but cannot determine those facts without more details. J. Worden was disturbed that no photos, plot plan, drawings, etc. accompanied application. S. Makowka advised owner of the concerns of the Commission related the lack of information that is specifically requested on the application. Concerning railings, applicant stated that the existing railings would be reused, attached to granite w/galvanized pipe set into granite and extended up into the railing.

S. Makowka asked if owner wants a continuation and he agreed and will provide plans, photos showing existing conditions, drawings showing new stairs & fixed railing, sketch at next meeting. J. Worden said masonry steps give heavy impression or appearance. Wants everyone to think about that – we need to envision that – it will look different. Applicant filled out Consent to Continue Hearing form and will come in next month with additional information. Exec. Sec. Greeley to schedule continued hearing for 7/22.

9:45pm – Formal Hearing Re: 210 Pleasant Street (Hart)

Application for construction of additional living space sited primarily over existing garage at the 1988 “Deck House” Residence

Attorney Mary Winstanley O’Connor representing the Hart family spoke. Introduced Mr. Hart whose family also owner of 208 Pleasant Street. Pictures given showing houses; - 3d renderings before & after, deck house built in 1988, need additional bed & bath because of living situation – plot plans, topographical plans, - picture 1 Spy Pond view (back of house) – proposed addition sited over garage; picture 2 Pleasant Street front of house - before & after; M. Hope Berkowitz said house is noticeable from Pleasant Street if standing on left side towards Route 2; elevation of garage doesn’t look pleasing due to height and lack of windows. Mr. Hart said it was not a problem to put windows down there. Commission concerned about size of addition (massing), which is emphasized by odd window layout.

Mr. Hart stated problem of no storage, limited interior space. Above the garage seems to be only place they could add any meaningful space. S. Makowka suggested an alternative that stayed within the existing building envelope: maybe garage space should become living space if that was a priority for the owners. S. Makowka expressed concern that the proposed addition significantly affects the view and dramatically changes the low, sleek character of the house from the Pleasant Street side. J. Worden gave history that building constructed just before district formed. L. Kuhn commented that the owner’s claim the roofline

was not raised was correct in back of house, but not in front. Current roofline raised several feet in the front (Pleasant St side), which will increase façade. Ms. O'Connor replied that house downgrade slope mitigates that several foot increase. – L. Kuhn suggested using garage for living space also – all Commissioners concerned about massing.

Resident John Costa of 214 Pleasant Street questioned where information regarding inside of the house came from, the assessors?

He never argued before about neighborhood changes, but now area being blocked off, he feels need to keep house same level. His own porch w/8 windows lost all view of lake, but his assessment is still high because of proximity to Spy Pond, but no view any more due to construction and hedgerows. Stated that he was not opposed to adding room but did oppose increasing height. S. Makowka reiterated # of bedrooms inside arrangements, etc. not of jurisdiction of Commission. Hedgerows, landscaping, etc. also beyond Commission's jurisdiction – they can't consider it at all in making their decision on a project

Takou Manuello, trustee of property @ 212 Pleasant Street said all homes on low side not wanting to have increase in height. Mr. Manuello tried to change gutters wood to aluminum told no so he didn't do it – 2nd story addition should not be allowed on this property as proposed.

Hart family wants increase of space due to increased size of family living in house.

S. Makowka asked if anyone desired to make a motion – J. Worden expressed concern with height on front of house; also blank wall without windows looks looming – he would have trouble voting for changes as presented. M. Potter agreed she'd have hard time supporting changes, then all others agreed. S. Makowka asked applicant if he wants Commission to vote on design or take feedback and see if there's a better way to make changes. Mr. Hart asked how the Commissioners would feel about 1 story addition to the left side of the present house and will work to modify designs. He asked for the hearing to be continued until July 22nd

Exec. Sec. Greeley to schedule continued hearing for 7/22.

Takou Manuello's husband will object to any exterior changes; L. Kuhn clarified that Commission does allow changes when they are sensitive to design of house & materials. He reiterated that the Commission does realize that additions are sometimes needed and approved as long as they don't negatively affect the feeling and character of the neighborhood.

L. Kuhn suggested Mr. Hart bring a new plot plan showing existing house, drawings of new proposed house to Commission prior to continued hearing on July 22nd

10:30pm - Informal Hearing Re: 187 Lowell Street (Mackey)

At 10:30pm no one was present at hearing that had been delayed from scheduled 10:00pm starting time.

L. Kuhn moved to adjourn at 10:45pm; J. Worden seconded, all voted in favor

Respectfully Submitted By,

Carol Ryerson Greeley
Executive Secretary